黒鉄 Kuro Gane

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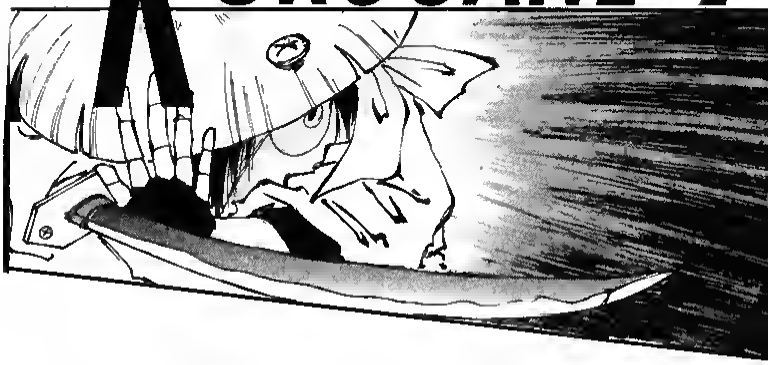
KUROGANE 2



Kei Toume

Translated by Ikoi Hiroe
Lettered by Gabriel Lee Levine

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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Life is filled with impermanence,
dreams, illusions, and shadows

Recent photograph of the author

HONORIFICS EXPLAINED

Throughout the Del Rey Manga books, you will find Japanese honorifics left intact in the translations. For those not familiar with how the Japanese use honorifics and, more important, how they differ from American honorifics, we present this brief overview.

Politeness has always been a critical facet of Japanese culture. Ever since the feudal era, when Japan was a highly stratified society, use of honorifics—which can be defined as polite speech that indicates relationship or status—has played an essential role in the Japanese language. When addressing someone in Japanese, an honorific usually takes the form of a suffix attached to one's name (example: "Asuna-san"), or as a title at the end of one's name, or in place of the name itself (example: "Negi-sensei" or simply "Sensei!").

Honorifics can be expressions of respect or endearment. In the context of manga and anime, honorifics give insight into the nature of the relationship between characters. Many English translations into English leave out these important honorifics, and therefore distort the feel of the original Japanese. Because Japanese honorifics contain nuances that English honorifics lack, it is our policy at Del Rey not to translate them. Here, instead, is a guide to some of the honorifics you may encounter in Del Rey Manga.

-san: This is the most common honorific and is equivalent to Mr., Miss, Ms., Mrs. It is the all-purpose honorific and can be used in any situation where politeness is required.

-sama: This is one level higher than "-san" and is used to confer great respect.

-dono: This comes from the word "tono," which means "lord." It is an even higher level than "-sama" and confers utmost respect.

-kun: This suffix is used at the end of boys' names to express familiarity or endearment. It is also sometimes used by men amongst friends, or when addressing someone younger or of a lower station.

-chan: This is used to express endearment, mostly toward girls. It is also used for little boys, pets, and between lovers. It gives a sense of childish cuteness.

Bazu: This is an informal way to refer to a boy, similar to the English terms "kid" or "squirt."

Sempai/ Senpai: This title suggests that the addressee is one's senior in a group or organization. It is most often used in a school setting, where underclassmen refer to their upperclassmen as "sempai." It can also be used in the workplace, such as when a newer employee addresses an employee who has seniority in the company.

Kohai: This is the opposite of "-sempai," and is used toward underclassmen in school or newcomers in the workplace. It connotes that the addressee is of a lower station.

Sensei: Literally meaning "one who has come before," this title is used for teachers, doctors, or masters of any profession or art.

-[blank]: This is usually forgotten in these lists, but it is perhaps the most significant difference between Japanese and English. The lack of honorific means that the speaker has permission to address the person in a very intimate way. Usually, only family, spouses, or very close friends have this kind of license. Known as *yobisute*, it can be gratifying when someone who has earned the intimacy starts to call one by one's name without an honorific. But when that intimacy hasn't been earned, it can be very insulting.

黒鉄

KUROGANE

2

Kei Toume

黒鉄
KUROGANE
冬目景

黒鉄 KURO GANE

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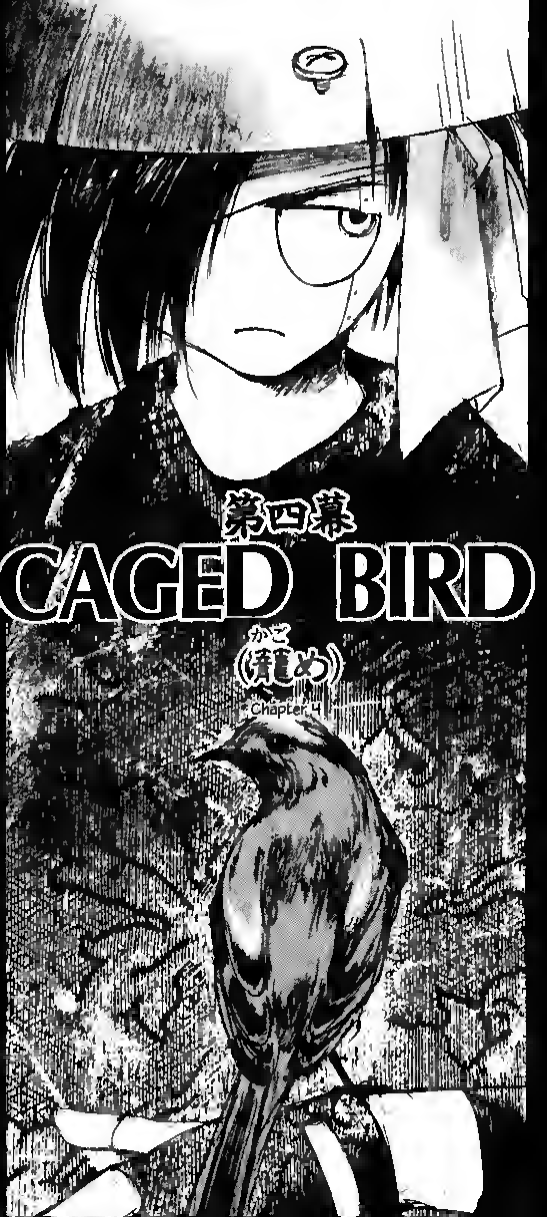
Episode 4



第四幕

CAGED BIRD

籠(かご)め

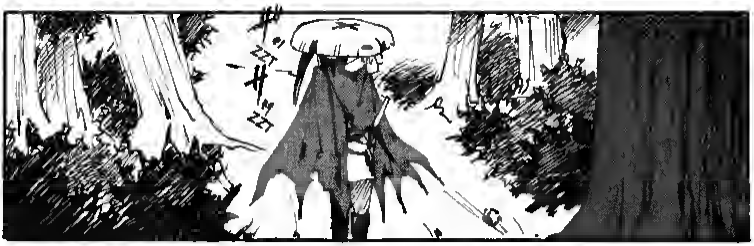
Chapter 4

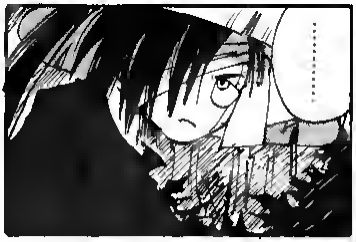
KTZ
KTZ
PANT
TINK

Master Shinbe was murdered last night, I hear...
They should be.
One of his men found him dead early this morning. They're in an uproar.
Master was a good guy. He didn't go around doing things to earn him grudges, so his men are at a loss.
CLINK
His men are running 'round all over the place lookin'..
They haven't found the killer yet.

We arrived at a bad time, partner.
Let's get the hell outta here before we get accused of this.
Do you think some drifter killed 'im?
Stop right there, stranger.
!
.....
I see...
Where did you sleep last night?
I just wanna ask you a few questions.
Well, my name's Kokichi Yotsuki. I represent the Shinbe family.
I slept out in the fields last night and arrived here this morning.
I wasn't a guest at a lender's house.

I'm not done yet.
I heard about it this morning.
My boss was murdered early this morning.
I'm a homeless drifter.
I have nothing to do with and nothing against your boss.
I had nothing to do with it.
I have one more question to ask.
Did you see a young woman on the road?
Jintetsu of Steel.
What's your name?
She's got pale skin, small build.
She's got cropped hair, looks about 14, 15.
I don't notice people when I'm travelin'.
Nope.

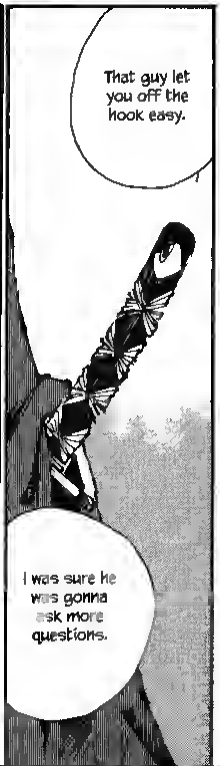

ZZT
ZZT



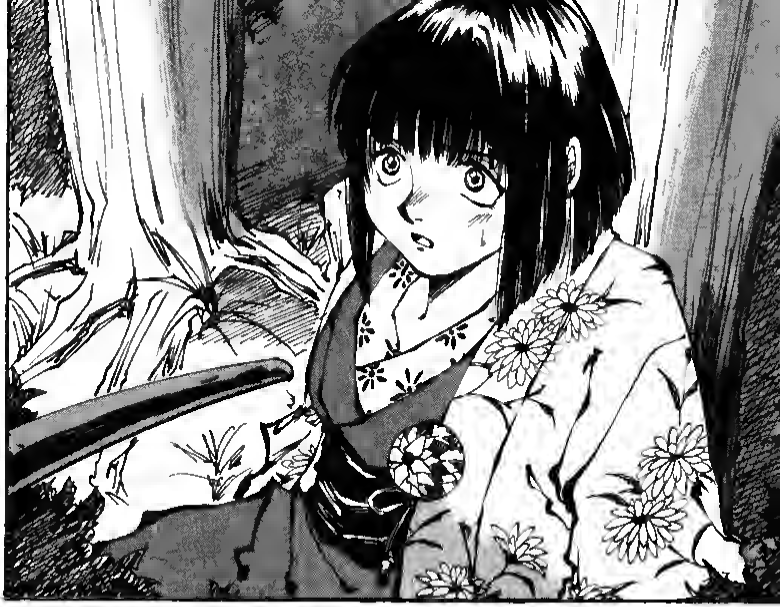
Is it more men from the Shinbe gang?
CHHT

GA
ER

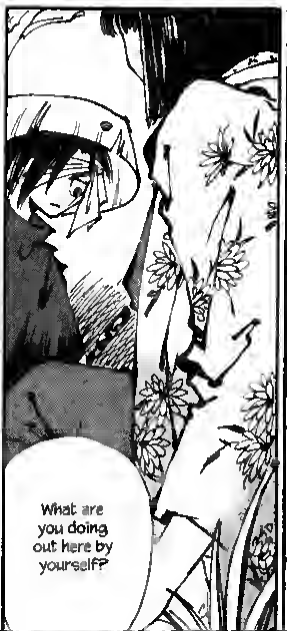
ZZT


That guy let you off the hook easy.
I was sure he was gonna ask more questions.

しん
SILENCE
?
SLIDE
ZA
!



Who are you?


What are you doing out here by yourself?

KACHH!
It's just a girl.

I'm just a traveler.

Looks like you're injured
Is that the girl Kokichi was talkin' about earlier?
ZZT
ZZT
It's none of our business.
TINK

TINK
ZZT

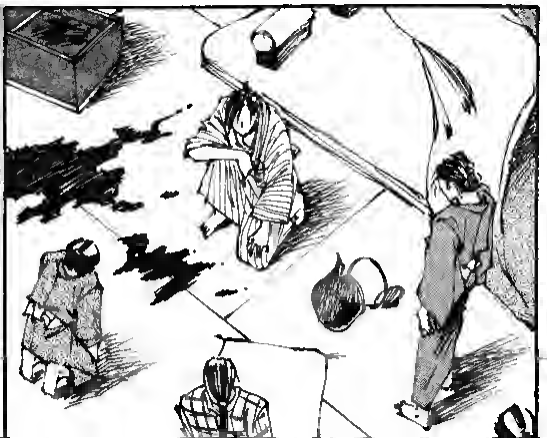
!
TWIRL
Stop following me.
You're leaving this town, right?
Take me with you I don't want to travel alone.
You won't be able to find your way back home soon.
I don't know your situation, but go home.
I can't go back.

Suit yourself.
BASH!

This is a back road. You're not dressed right, and these roads aren't made for girls' legs.

But... I have no choice.

新



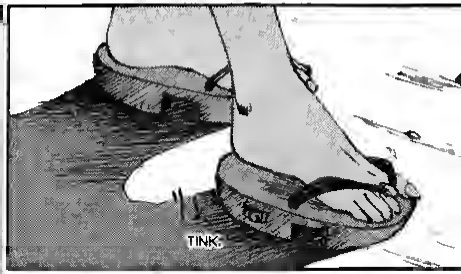
Boss may have been old, but he wasn't careless.
He was killed by someone he knew.
The boss was hit from behind with a steel bottle.
If it was a drifter, he would have used his sword.
Kokichi...
Kokichi, Osaya has
been missing since this morning.
I see.
I knew it...

Hey!
I'm talking to you!
Wait for me!
I can't walk like this.
The strap broke.
Get lost, will ya!
I told you not to follow me.
Take care of it your-self.
It's too late now. Just fix it for me, please?

Look, I'm hurt! Are you going to leave a girl stranded out on the road?
You're a worthless, heartless devil!
THUD THUD
!
SNATCH
Tee hee
Dammit, I'm a Toseinin
You shouldn't be so trusting.
You're not too bright, are ya?
You gave me medicine.
You haven't done anything to me yet.

Besides,...
.. I like your mask.
Nope.
Haven't you fixed your own geta* strap before?
*See translation notes.
My daddy did everything for me.
Looks like you were cared for.
カラン
THUNK
Here you go.

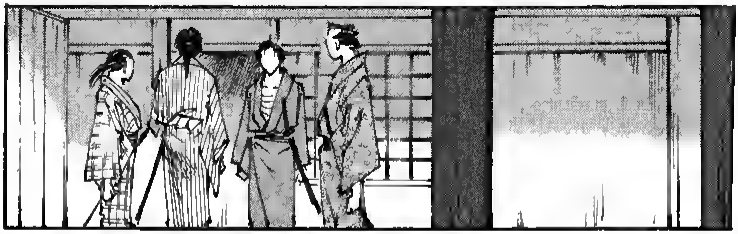
I'm 24.


TINK

How old are you?

Thank you.

My daddy insisted...
... that I was a child.
You look much younger.
You're wearing a girl's kimono. Same goes for your haircut...
24?
ZZT
He wanted me to stay that way.
My daddy's dead.
You're one helluva shel tered kid. Why are you running away?



I'll kill her as soon as I find her

Osaya killed the boss.
I'm sure she took the back road out of town. A woman can't walk too fast. She's probably not too far...

Are you sure, Kokichi?

Were you in a fight?
I'm sure. Osaya may be the boss's woman, but she committed murder.
There's no way I can let her get away with this.
You're bleeding...
No...
I'm just his toy.
Are you the boss's daughter?
You must be new.

My daddy bought me.-
when I was eight.
So, you were his mistress, eh?
What's a mistress?
You don't wanna know
After I came to live with daddy, he gave me good food to eat and ...
.....
I don't remember my real father.
I just remember that we were very poor.
But, Daddy
...refused to let me out of the house.
.- pretty kimonos to wear

Osayo, you don't need to know about the world..
You're my beautiful daughter.
Just stay by my side.
I begged him over and over, but he wouldn't allow it.
As long as Daddy was alive, I'd never see outside the house.
He took good care of me, but it was suffocating. I couldn't tell if I was alive or dead. I ran away, but every time, people would find me and bring me back to him..
I was a caged bird..
.....
It must be care-free to be a traveler.

Everywhere I go, I'm a stranger. I'm not allowed to live anywhere in peace. I don't belong to a gang and I don't have a boss. I'm a homeless drifter.
It's not as easy as you think, woman.
I was chased out of my village, I'm basically as good as dead.

I'll just drift until I die somewhere.
I have no purpose. I don't have anyone waiting for me.

A man named Kokichi was looking for you.
!

You think a sheltered woman like you is going to be able to survive in this world alone?

Is that what you want out of life?

He might be looking...
... but he's not waiting for me.
Since the boss is dead, he can't keep you in the house anymore.
Go back if someone is still waiting for you.
Do you know why he's looking for me?
He's going to kill me.
There's no way he wants me back.
I'm just a dumb woman.
You..
.. couldn't have...

There you are!
ZZT

Osaya, do you know what you've done? How dare you repay the boss's kindness like that
SST
.....
.....
ZZT
I remember you ..
I know, but that was the only way .
...I could be free.

Please, move out of the way
Hey, wait...
I'm sorry.
I don't want to get you involved.
It's all right.

KOHT.
If you can't kill her, I will...
DASH
What's wrong!?
Kokichi!

CLANG
What...?
It's too bad you found us.
I found her trying to escape this morning. I made her kill Shimbe
Your boss and I had some unfinished business.

Bastard. ./
You..

CLANG
JAR!
!
CRUMBLE

Hey!
!
CRUMBLE
CRUMBLE
Should we check for their bodies?
.....

There's no way they're alive.
It's a steep fall.
ZZT
Let's go.
CRICK

TWEET
I'm leaving.
Are you going to stay here?
Thank you for everything. I'm going to try to make it on my own.
CHIRP
CHIRP
Freedom ain't all that, you know.

This is the first choice I've made in my life.
I'm not going to regret this, no matter what.
Take care of yourself
.....
I hate helping people.
I hate being righteous and sympathetic.
.....
MUMBLE MUMBLE
THE END OF CHAPTER 4

Chapter 5
第五幕
MAN WITH A CHILD'S EYES
(少年の眼を持った男)

..tetsu...
Jinbetsu
Seemed like you were having a night-mare

.....
.....
Don't be surprised. My brain is right next to yours.
As a result, I can tell what you're thinking and see your dreams.
Don't worry.
I have nightmares too.

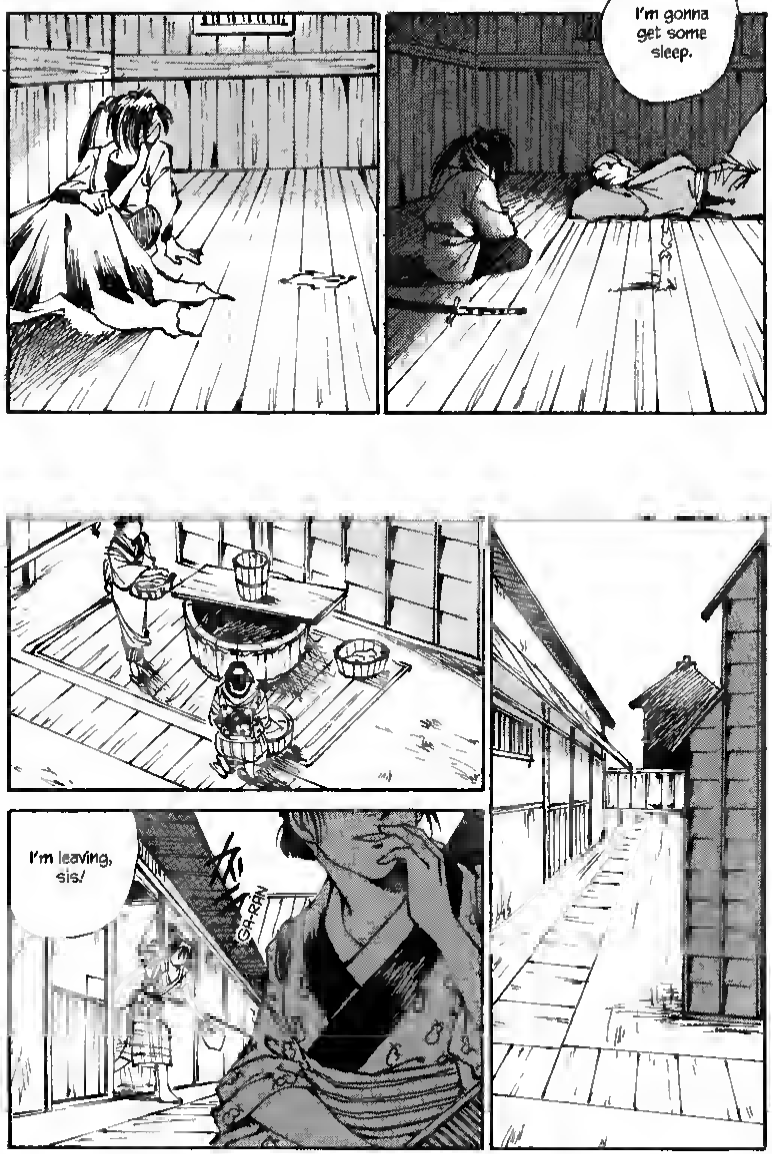
SPLASH

Sorry to bother you.
SPLASH
SHRIKE
Wait.
Do I know you?

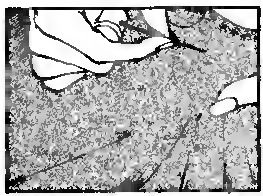
So you *really* are Jintetsu.
Didn't expect to run into you here. It's been two years, right?
You sure don't look the same.
Something happen?
Yup.
Let me guess. You haven't seen the boss yet?
Master Risaburo?
I've been called by Master Risaburo again.

... the boss has been good to me. I still think it's pointless.
I really can't stand doing this, but...
Remember? We were hired as helping hands during the problems they had with the Izou family across the river.
You should find yourself a good boss and get out of this drifter business.
You're still young
That said, this job will bring me some money. I'm just not fond of all the code of conduct that comes with being a Toseinin.
I don't wanna belong to a gang either.
Looking at ya reminds me of myself when I was younger.

Your eyes.
it's your eyes
Your eyes burn with hate.
Everyone has been hurt once or twice in their life Most people get a little twisted along the way. You're different.
about your life, your situation, and the world.
I can see from your eyes that you absolutely hate everything
You've never been the one to talk.
ゴゥ
ROU
.....
You might be wearin' a mask but your eyes give you away.
What happened to your other eye?


I'm gonna get some sleep.
I'm leaving, sis!
GR-RRN

* See translation notes.



How are you doing, ma'am?
Shirou has asked me to look after you.
You're my neighbor's wife...
I need to check in once in a while.
My brother worries so much I'm sorry...
Who can blame him?
I'm glad you can work at home as a seamstress.
I can't let Shirou do all the work.
WAHAHA
Shirou has matured quite a bit since I met you both two years ago.
GURGLE
It's because I'm blind...
Oh...

You must be looking for this.
Thank you so much.
I know something happened during the attack.
Doctors are too expensive. I don't mind being blind, really...
Okyou-chan, a good doctor can help...
... you see again, right?
By the way, my husband...
... told me he saw "Renji the Firewalker" yesterday.

He could be mistaken.
...making a ruckus.
He was spotted in a crowd of Toseinins..
Half his face was covered by burn scars.
I don't think he's part of Master Risaburo's gang.
Please don't mention this...
...to my brother.
Why not?
He killed your father without any reason. You went blind as a result... You should drag him into the government office..
We're not from here, nor is the killer. We have no proof.
Please, don't mention this to Shirou.

Were you checking in on Okyou-chan?
That's what neighbors are for.
Otake-san!
I just feel so bad for her, especially since...
...she's such a pretty girl...
I feel bad for those kids,
getting all caught up in a drifter's fight.
TRP TRP
I think she just wants to forget and move on.
That's true.
TRP
I heard they used to be traveling performers.

He Forgot it..
This must be Shirou's lunch...
I should bring it to him.
It's not too far away..
If I tell Otake, she'll worry...
I don't want to bother her.

RUMBLE RUMBLE
It feels like it's going to rain....
.....
!
DASH

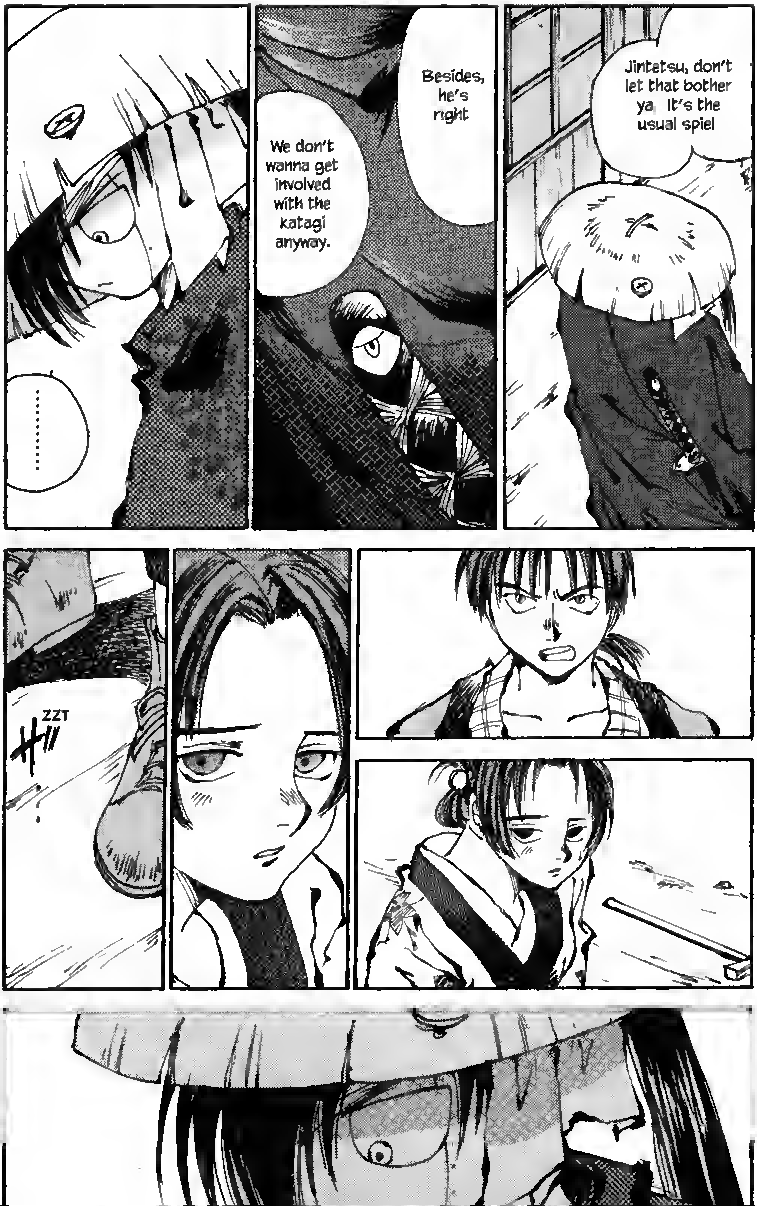
Excuse me.
THUD
CLATTER
Let me help you.
Thank you.
Don't touch my sister!

LEAP
I just wanted to help her.
Shirou?
She doesn't need your help! We want nothing to do with toseinins!

You people talk about having rules,...
..but you guys are nothing but paid killers!
If you're a toseinin,
don't bother normal folks like us!

Shirou...
It's OK. I told you not to wander out by yourself

.....
Hh...


Jintetsu, don't let that bother ya. It's the usual spiel
Besides, he's right
We don't wanna get involved with the katagi anyway.
.....
ZZT

Jintetsu...?
RUMBLE
RUMBLE

DROP
DROP
How much is that Kougai*?
*Kougai - an Ancient Japanese Hair Ornament worn by Males
Dammit..
It's starting to rain

It's gonna be pourin' for a while.
We were supposed to leave by tonight, but...
. . we have no choice.
We're stuck here for another night.

Jintetsu, you've been acting strange.
?
.....
.....
Father!

Why!
CLANG
Why did you kill him!
Damned travelers!
Let go of me!
SHOVE
Who the hell are you people!
What did my father do to deserve this!

ZRRRR
Sorry, didn't mean to look into your thoughts.
You're feeling regret?
.....
I don't know about your past, but...
...don't think about it.
...regrets won't do you any good.
I know it's hard when they show up again, but...

You still kill for a living. Emotions just get in the way.
SPLISH SPLASH
You think so, eh?
It's not gonna stop raining soon...
Yuck! How gross.
DASH!

Does my scar scare you, kid?
SPLASH
Heh...
.....
...

Okyou!
GA-RON
I found him!
What is it?
.....
The guy that killed our father!
The guy with the scar!
Found what?

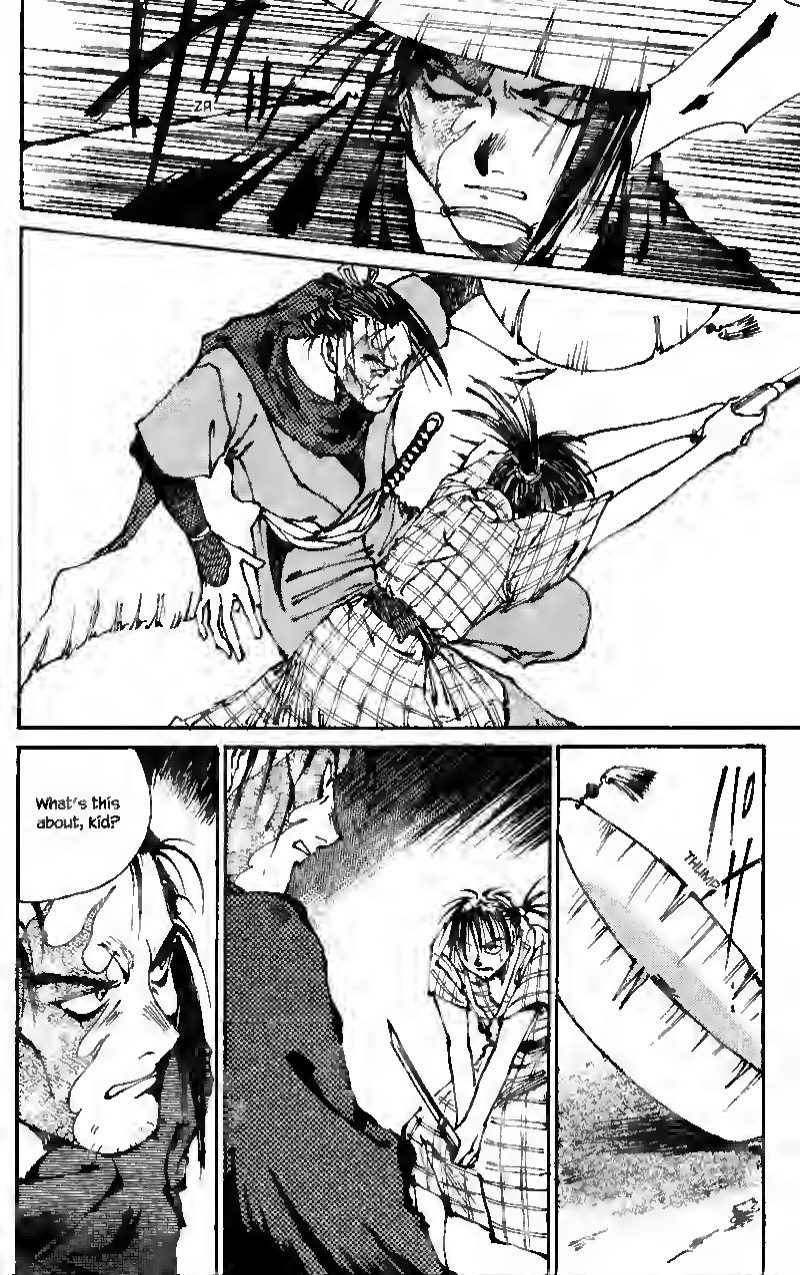
He's visiting Risaburo.
I followed him. He's at the *kichinyado at the edge of town.
He was traveling, but he was taking shelter from the rain.
He's leaving tomorrow morning.
He's gonna eat some steel tonight.

*Kichinyado = run-down lodge

What do you mean?
I'm gonna kill that bastard.
Move on?
He killed our father. Don't you want him dead?
You haven't moved on yet...
Did you forget what he did to us?

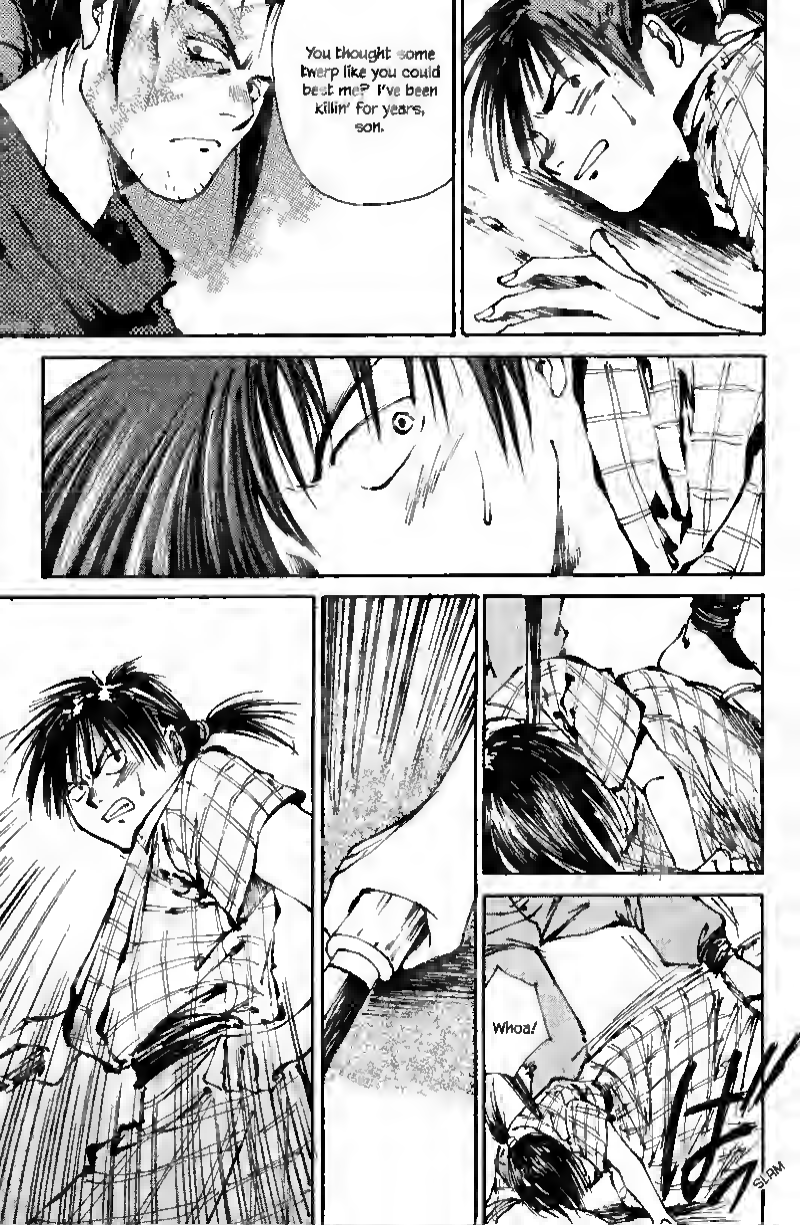
I wasn't strong enough to protect you.
All I could do was shake and watch ..
Skirou...
I'm strong enough now!
I always thought that I could protect you, but I couldn't .
I was just a kid back then.
It's just that you could get hurt or killed.
I haven't forgotten.
Okyou...
Stop!

...than avenging our father's death
I'm more interested in keeping you alive...
.....
...he's not coming back.
I loved our father, but...
Please, Shirou. Think about this.
ZARRA
I refuse to lose you too.


ZA
What's this about, kid?
THUMP

Renji the Firewalker!
I'm here to avenge my father's death!
.....?
What clan do you belong to?
I don't belong to a gang.
My family are street performers. We got mixed up in a fight two years ago!
Two years ago?
What?
Street performers?
I don't recall—
Even if you don't remember, —
... I do!
FLASH

THWAK
STALK
I don't know..
SLAM
AGH.
... what the heck you're talkin' about, but swinging a sword is serious business.


You thought some twerp like you could best me? I've been killin' for years, son.
Whoa!
SLAM

Didn't you...
... hear what I said?
Huh?
THRUST
I prefer not to kill women or children.
From the looks of it, you're not a little kid anymore.

We don't kill the katagi. That's against the bosei code.
If you're a real man, ...
... we can end this my way.
It's you...
Mind your own business.
Take that goddamned code and stuff it.
I'm just defending myself.

You've done enough.
This isn't like you, Jintetsu.
Why are you defending this kid? You owe him something?
You won't make any money killing him.

I remember what happened two years ago. During the fight with the Kunimatsu family,
we accidentally killed a traveler.
You were there with me.

That fight was a confusing mess.
It was dark, so I couldn't tell who the hell I was hitting.
I just sliced up every guy that I couldn't recognize.
!

That's your sob story, Jintetsu?
You must be kiddin' me.
Damn you!
SHOVE
That was just bad luck kid.
Wrong place at the wrong time.

You don't wanna feel guilty
Am I right?
It's called guilt, and you're trying to feel better about your sorry ass.
I'll tell ya what's going on in your head.

You're too soft.
Saving this kid isn't gonna do jack for your conscience.
Now that you know what's up, go mind your own business.
This ain't gonna be pretty.
You've changed, Jintetsu.
.....

He tried to kill me, so I'm gonna kill 'im.
This isn't about money. I don't care if he's a katagi.
You're gonna kill him?
Right, kid?
I'm sure he knew what he was gettin' into.
.....
All right. If that's the case...
.....

You're right.
I'm probably acting out of guilt.
I know this isn't gonna resolve anything.
I'm not trying to be the good guy here.
I don't get you.
Whaddya think you're doin'?
You may be right. I could be going soft.
I just can't let you kill this guy.

This has nothing to do with reason.
I just have to do this.
.....
I always thought we were on the same path.
Jintetsu...

The worthless jerks-off's that we deal with and our screwed-up lives...
I hate every single one and every second.
We are..
I just think we're starting to see things differently.
I've got a reason to value my life.
I'm just wanna go down fighting.
Why carry a sword if you're ready?
I'm ready to die anytime.

You think you can kill me?
I don't know

This is pointless.
!
DROP
I'm not gonna tangle with you on account of this twerp.

I'm gonna leave. What a waste of my time.
I have no reason to.
Waste your life if you want...

Why should I fight over...
... something as pointless like this?
.....
.....
Dash
Dash

SWOOSH
BRRR.

I'd wrap it up with a cloth and stem the bleeding.
Don't move much
The wound doesn't look very deep.
Dammit! Dammit!
Dammit!
.....
Shut up!
Of course not.
.....
Don't think for a minute that I owe my life to you!
BASAH!

Jintetsu..
Look... late blooming cherry blossoms..
THE END OF CHAPTER 5

第六幕
COLORS
(二色の独楽)
—第一景—

CRACK
SLAP
Wanna check it out?
I lost *again!* What the hell is going on!!
This game is rigged!

I'll pass.
Ten grown men haven't been able to beat you.
Is there anyone that can beat me? C'mon, people!
I guess we're all done then..
Well, I guess it's time for you guys to pay up!
GRRR.
Dammit!
TINK

You must be the one raking in the money around here.
You gotta problem with that? Wanna see if you can beat me?
So..
A little outsider like you doin' business like this makes us locals look bad. You understand?
Shut up!
You trying to bully me into giving up my money?
You're carrying a sword like you're all grown up!
You're a mouthy little chump

You're an outsider doin' business.
THWAK
It's good manners to give some of the money to the local hosts, don't you think?
THUNK
Ouch!
CLATA
SWING
Whoa!
BASH
CHUNK

...little jerk!
You...
PWOOSH
SMACK
DASH
You really pissed me off.

Wait, you little weasel!
I'm not gonna wait for those idiots!
When did this hap-pen..
ARGH...

Pant
ZZT
Crap.
It's starting to hurt.
SLUMP

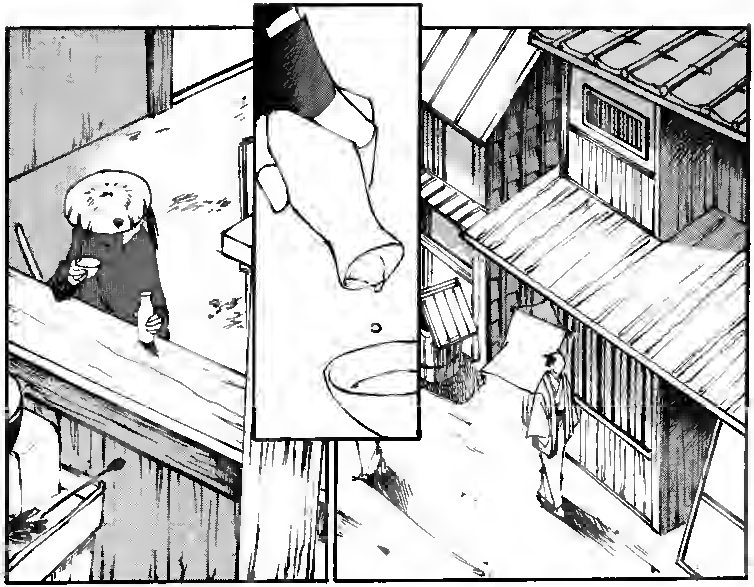
Don't pick at your wound.

Who the hell...
... are you?
Just a traveler.
Here's some ointment.
It'll stop the bleeding.
I'm fine.
Leave me alone.
Fair enough

What did you say?
You shouldn't be carrying a short sword.
That's why hoodlums were pickin' on you.
!
I'm not blind. You can't fool me into thinking you're male
Are you tryin' to mess with me?
What's your name?
I'm not a...

Jintetsu of Steel
.....
Jintetsu of Steel...?

CHUFF
SMACK



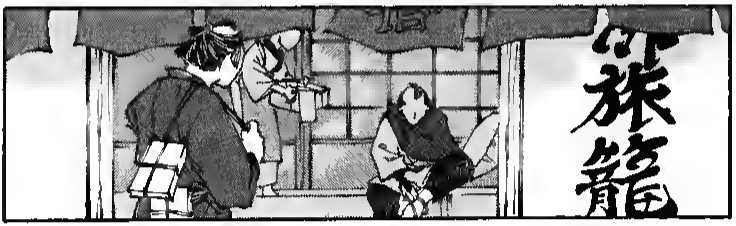
GTTRN

It's getting dark. We should find some lodging.

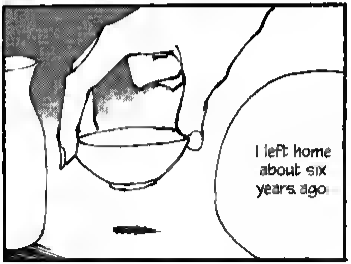
*Kasukabe = currently the city of Kasukabe in Saitama Prefecture
He'll arrive by morning.
Either way...
He could also take the surface street and head directly towards Kasukabe.*
TINK
CLATTER
He's definitely heading towards Sugito Inn.
Excuse me, sir.
Are you...
...Jintetsu of Steel?

!
I am Ryujiro of Yashuyugi.
Who are you...?
I am.
If you really are Jintetsu, you would remember my name.
I'm glad you remember me.
I've heard rumors about a drifter wearing a steel mask.
I heard that the drifter was named Jintetsu, and he was from Kinusato I knew it would be you.
I was sure I would run into you again one day .
I'd love to sit down and talk.
We're staying at the lodge right over there

No...
not exactly.
Why? Are you in a hurry?
I'd love to, but ..
Then what's holding you back?
I'd like to offer you a job.


旅籠

I also heard that you were dead. I'm glad you're not.
Soon after I left, I started to hear rumors about you-


I left home about six years ago.

So, why are you wearing a mask now?
.....
I see you still aren't much for small talk.
I'm 7 years older than you, and I lived next to your family.
Since you didn't have a mother, I often took care of you.
You were such a strange kid. You wouldn't laugh or cry.
You'd just silently follow me.
.....
What do you want from me?
I thought you would take on the family business and do really well.
How did you end up as a drifter?
Oh, that's right...

Three months ago, someone killed him
Right now, I'm a representative for the Izou family of Yugi.
I was supposed to be the next head of the family after my boss stepped down...
I don't know who paid him, but I finally learned the identity of the man that killed him. I'm traveling with my men for revenge.
My master was a well-known money-lender* in the area. He was ambitious, and made many enemies...
I'm lucky to run into you.
You're young, but I hear your skill is second to none.
I hear he's a real tough guy.
I heard he was heading this direction so we've been trying to set a trap
I had some misgivings, as my men are all young and inexperienced.

*Master Izou was a type of moneylender that had the ability to introduce brawlers to other Masters/ classes.

I also heard you're...
an assassin for hire.
Rumors grow wings.
If that's what you want, then I'm going to have to refuse.
Is that just a wild rumor?
If you don't belong to a family, there aren't a lot of ways to make a living.
I'll pay you 5 ryou...
...to kill Renji the Firewalker.

Did you say.
Renji the Firewalker?
I'm sorry, but I can't accept your offer.
Find someone else.
We believe one of the local moneylenders bought him with money.
He's a famous drifter. You may have heard of him before.
There aren't many men with your reputation of skill. You won't be the only one. We'll be backing you up.
Count me out.
TINK

It's nothing like that.
I'd just rather not tangle with him.
Is it because you...
...owe him?
.....
I'll raise the price to seven ryou.
This has nothing to do with money.
SHISH

What are you trying to do? You're going to be the next...
.head of the clan Don't beg at the foot of a drifter like me.
But .
I have no choice but to kill him.
I'm only the next boss because his daughter fell in love with me, not because of my abilities.
She finally convinced her father. Until then, I was told I was too young at 24, and was told to wait for my turn
His family, along with all the senior members, won't be satisfied, otherwise. Our meeting wasn't a coincidence.
In order to take my position as boss, I have to kill his killer to prove myself
I've heard you might be headed this way, so I was waiting for you

I understand your situation,
but I can't change my mind.
If it's not about money, let me..
..make you another offer
If you help me kill him, ...
I'll be the boss, so nobody will be able to complain. You can be my right-hand man
I swear that I'll treat you well
... you can join my gang.

That's not worth anything to me either.
It's an incredible offer. A homeless drifter just dies all alone somewhere. Don't you think that's a waste?
Why!?
I've abandoned my past.
Hold on!
it might be pathetic, but...
GARAN
Look, we grew up together! We're childhood friends! I'm begging you!
...I won't be enslaved by the world.

This wood-shed seems abandoned.
FLAP
TAP

FLOP
ゴロ
.....
It's big, huh?
Jintetsu, look over here!
WHIRRR

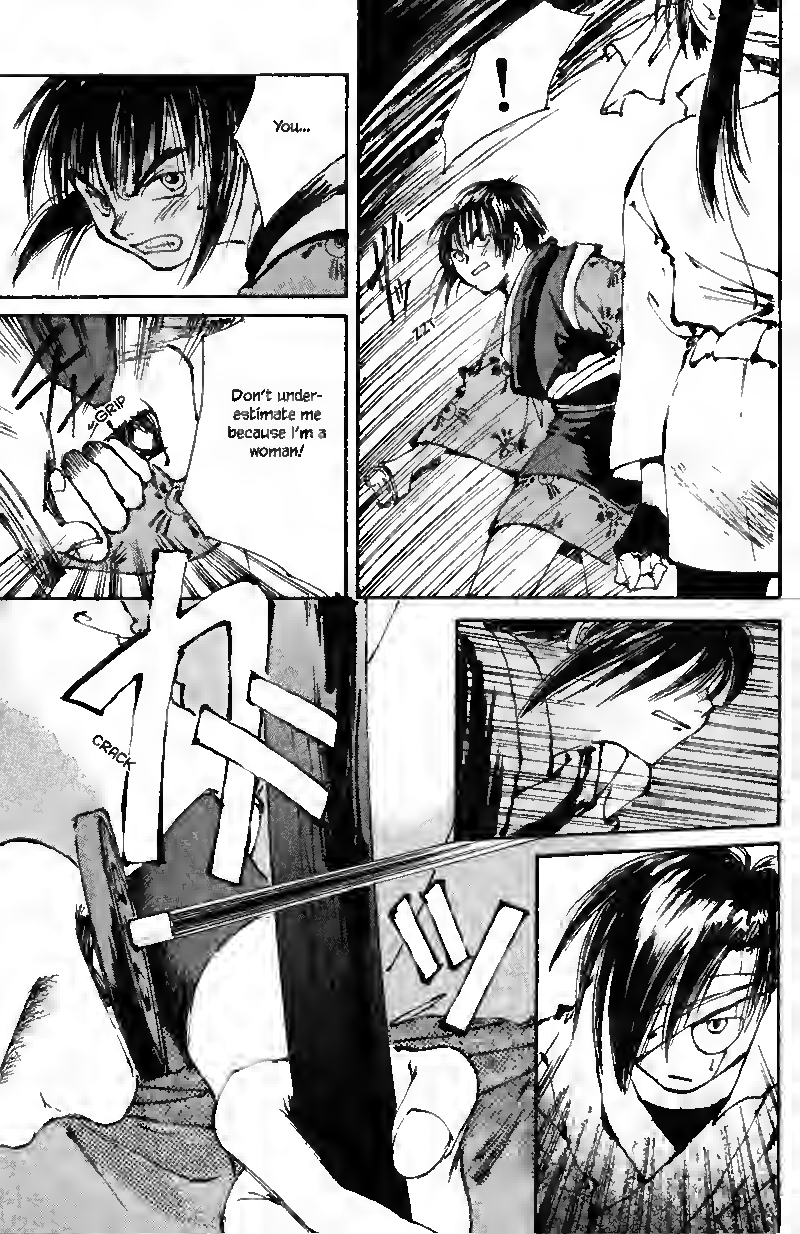
?
KLATTER
SLICE

BASAH
!
I'm here to avenge the Akagi family..
Jintetsu of Steel..

LEAP
Damn!
GRRR

What is this about?
I met you earlier.
ZZT
One year ago, Benzou of Kizaki helped you steal money...
...to frame the Akagi Clan of Kizaki. I am the daughter of the Akagi family!
?
My mother was framed for the theft and arrested. She killed herself in prison.
?

Tonight, I will avenge her death!
Don't lie to me!
It makes you look pathetic!
Wait a sec... I don't know what you're talking about.
SWING

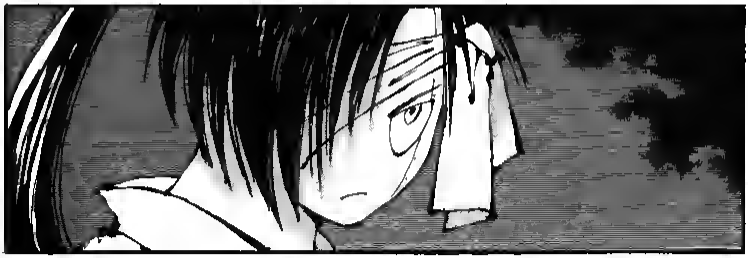

You...
!
ZIT
GRIP
Don't underestimate me because I'm a woman!
CRACK

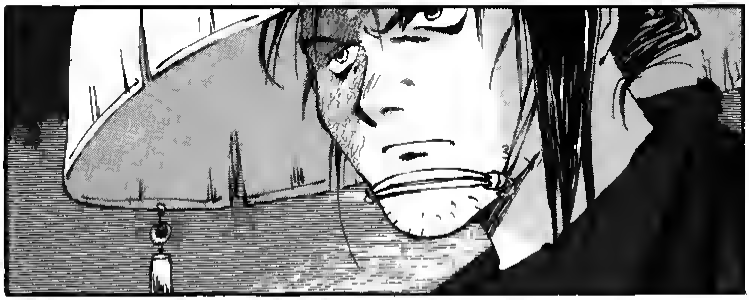
SCRAPE
Why don't you calm down and hear what I have to say
There's a scratch on the scabbard

GRAB
TUG
It's not over yet!
Father!
KOFF

I keep runnin' into your ass.
Damn...
!
The End of Chapter 6 Episode 1

第六幕
COLORS
(二色の独楽)
Chapter 6
Episode 2
—第二景—





TUG
Father, lemme go!
Why are you stopping me?
GRRR...

This isn't your night, kid.
Why? Is it 'cause you know this jerk?
!
You can't fight with a bum leg.

There's a guy lookin' for you.
Renji...
I was already here by this afternoon, but I was hiding out and waiting for nightfall.
I know.
I'm gonna take the back road to Kasukabe.
That means I don't have time to spend on you. Not that it matters, but I'm sure we'll meet again
After all, this kid seems to have some unfinished business with you.

I didn't know you had a kid.
ZA
That girl's said she was from the Akagi family, right?

...a famous moneylender with a female boss.
The Akagi clan was...
You really don't remember?
I don't know why she'd have a grudge against you.
By the way...
KA-TAN
That psycho girl probably won't listen even if told her
MUMBLE MUMBLE
What a mix-up..

What are you worried about?
It doesn't matter if either of them dies.
It's their business.
I think Renji will be able to escape just fine.
You made the right choice
You just didn't wanna take a job that would leave you conflicted.
.....
.....

Your wound's open again.
Hold still. I'll wrap it for you.
RIP

I can do it myself!
Sure.
Makoto
catch up with me later.

What do you mean?
I'm the only one they're looking for
You can't walk as fast with your injury
I'm going to head to Kasukabe first. Once I get there, I'll hide out and you can find me there
I know we're taking the back road but I'm sure the guys aren't idiots. They might have some fool waiting for me

.....
Usually, you wait in some town while I work, then I meet you there. It's just the reverse.
This is just like our normal plan.
.....
I'm holding you back.
I get it.
.....
That's right.

.....
I just need to stay alive through tonight.
Makoto..
If anything happens to me, you need to go here.
TUG
It's a boss I've known for a long time.
He's a decent man. He'll be good to you
Father...

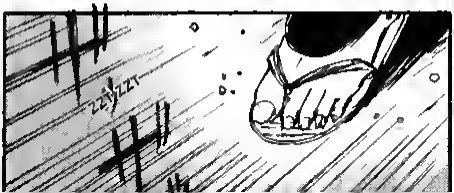
Don't think too much.
This is just a precaution.
.....
There're plenty of thugs roamin' around.
Watch your back.
.....
I might be hurt, but I can still take care of myself.
That's true.
I gotta hurry.
See ya later.

BASHI
Will you really be waiting for me?
Makoto!

All right..
Of course.
Don't look so worried.
BASA
ZA

ZA

ZZT ZZT


ZZT ZZT

CRUNCH
ZA
ZZT ZZT
SILENCE
PTHUNK
SPURT

KIIING
!?
SLASH

DAMN!
カラン
KA-RAN
ZZT

You're not that tough as long as I don't have to fight you one-on-one.
I knew they'd set a trap for me.
Looks like you don't have the balls to face me directly.
Cry all you want. We fight smart, that's the difference.
There's a trap set at every exit outta this town.
You cowards...
Looks like your arm's screwed. You're not much of a fighter now, are ya, old man
Right...
CHAT

ZA
ZA
.....
ZA
KTZ
Father....
Crap...

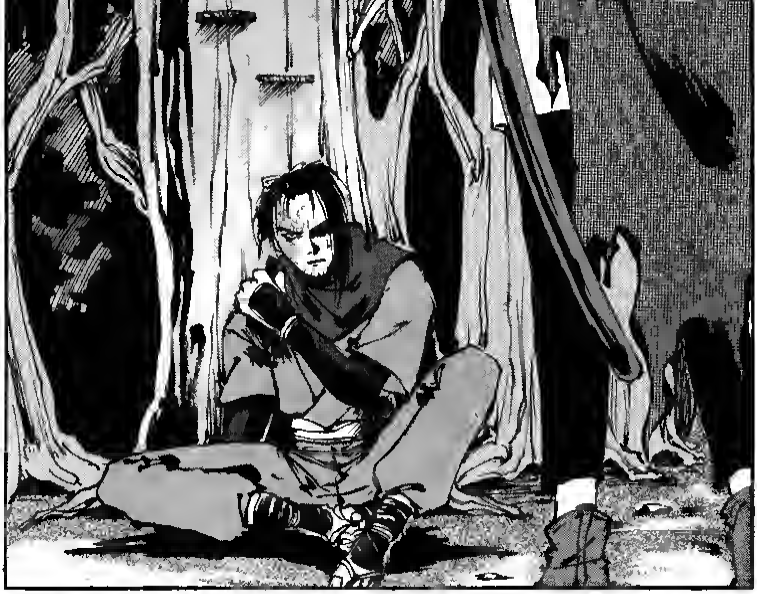
You're runnin' outta breath, you geezer.
PANT
You're nothing but a grown-up punk.
RRRIP
PUSH

STAGGER
CRAK!
CRAK!
You're no good without your right arm.
THUNK THUNK

Who the heli-/
CHIN
?
GLARE
TSHWINN

The End of Chapter 6 Episode 2

第六幕
COLORS
(二色の独楽)
—第三景—



Why are you here?
Jintetsu...

Don't worry I'm not here to help you.
.....

Depending on the situation, I could have killed you.
It just ended up that way.
What do you mean by that?
It's a long story.
Either way...
No kidding...
...I wanna tell you to leave, but...
...you're in no shape.
Wait...
Where's your kid?

Father!
ZZT
You bastard!
Jintetsu...
CHHT

I don't wanna hear a word!
CLANG!
Hey, wait a minute...
!
Makoto!

What? Why?
Chill out, girl.
That jerk's dead, thanks to Jintetsu.
I owe him.
.....
That means...
Jintetsu saved my life.
You are not to harm this man on my account.

カチッ
KLIK
.....
I need to take care of your wounds.
That's a lot of blood.

I gotta go find someplace to hide out.
GGH...
ZZT
I can handle it.
KTZ
Can you walk?
!

I know you want me to get lost, but...
...your bum leg won't be able to bear the weight.
This is pathetic.

Don't worry. He's just sleeping.
I covered his wounds with a styptic, so that should stop the bleeding.
I didn't ask you to treat him. If you would have left...
I wasn't sure you could treat him properly.
I'm not stupid.
I can-
Be quiet. He needs to rest.

I owe you now that you saved my father
That doesn't mean I've forgiven you
Damn, I'm out of bandages...
Before you think about who owes what, you need to figure out a way to get the hell outta here, eh?
What?
Do you have any extra cloth?
.....
Cloth...

?
GOSO GOSO
It's my undergar- ment
Where did you get this?
Go ahead and use it

Why do you dress like a man?
It's easier when I'm on the road.
I don't wanna be a burden to my father.

NOD
Get some sleep.
You need to be alert in the morning.
Looks like his bleeding's stopped. He's still asleep
How is Father?

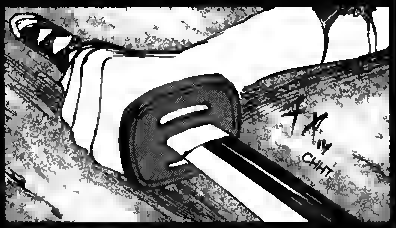
I ran, so the wound opened up again.
I'll be awake until he wakes up.
You're injured yourself!
You guys are one strange family.
I felt like something was wrong, so I ran.
He's not my real father.
He'd probably tell me that I was a burden, but...

You're still here.
Jintetsu

How do you feel?
Not bad.
ZZT
I can take the pain. My right arm feels numb.
I can't wield a sword.
If my arm wasn't injured...
..that punk wouldn't have been a problem.
This isn't gonna be a straight-forward fight.
I can't let my guard down.
All exits out of town are being watched.
They'll be looking when the sun comes up.

Maybe you should fall back for now.
Don't take the side road, but the front road. I'm sure the men are thinking about what you're gonna do.
They probably think you're gonna face them full-on.
If I wasn't injured, I wouldn't mind facing them.
.....
I also have her to think about.

I heard that ...
.. she's not your kid
That's right
I found her.
She was badly injured.
About a year ago.
I found her on the side of a road in Kizaki at night.


Chirr!

... she was still alive. Still a kid, to boot.

Thought it was a dead body, but when I tried to pass by, ...

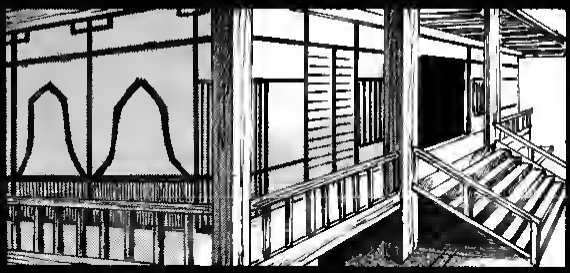
I could tell she was a girl. Her head was covered in blood, but her eyes were shining and starin' at me.

She keeps following me.

I was planning to leave her at some village once she was healed up

She seemed like a rare kind, so I thought I'd help her
I ain't gonna hurt ya.

In Kizaki, two moneylending clans called the Akagi and Benzou clan were feuding.
The Akagi boss passed away, and his wife took over the clan. The wife was Makoto's mother.
It's a common story that said...
the Akagi family was unusual.
She earned her subordinates' respect through her beauty and dignity.
The boss, just like Makoto, had sharp eyes and a ruddy complexion. She was a very straightforward woman.
Then, the boss was arrested.
Makoto was expected to be the next boss, so she was raised like a boy.



The mayor collected money from the villagers to repair the main hall of a temple. The money was stolen and a scandal broke out.

Benzou said that he saw someone from the Akagi clan wandering near the mayor's house at night.

He didn't want to be a suspect, and he thought defending the Akagi would seem dubious, so he kept his trap shut.

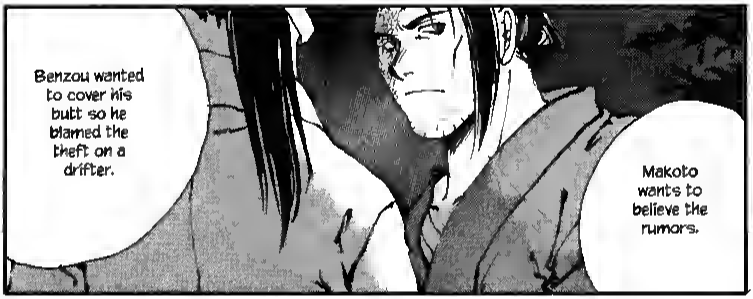
The mayor had been known to side with the Akagi clan.

...but a clan member's alibi was considered insufficient, and the boss was arrested.

As a result, the clan was falsely accused. They furiously denied it...

The boss couldn't tell the location of the money. After all, she had nothing to do with the theft.
After days of being tortured, she bit off her own tongue and killed herself.
They succeeded in killing Benzou himself, but everyone else in her clan was killed.
She was badly injured, and barely managed to escape when she fell on the side of the road.
Makoto found out that the Benzou family plotted this all along, and took the surviving clan members to face off with the enemy.

So I'm supposed to be the guy that stole the money?


Benzou wanted to cover his butt so he blamed the theft on a drifter.
Makoto wants to believe the rumors.

I know it's probably a mess you don't wanna deal with.
She'll find out the truth eventually.

I don't know if she believes the rumor.
I think she's forcing herself to believe it.
After all, she's an orphan now that her whole clan was slaughtered. She probably needs something to live for.

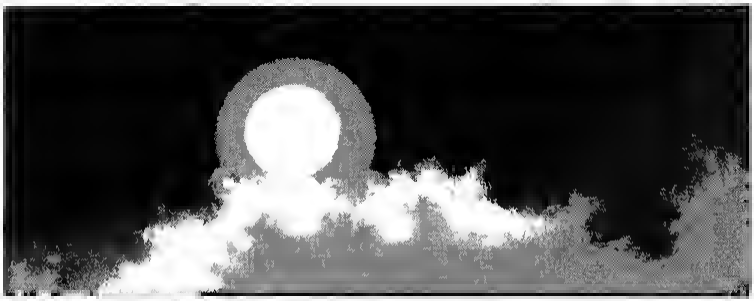
?

...it's time for me to part ways with her.
BASAH
Actually, ...
I knew I had to say good-bye at some point.
I was going to leave her and not see her again after we parted ways earlier tonight.
She calls me Father.
I've recently figured out that I mean more to her than that.
She's dressed as a man, but...
.. she's not going to be able to hide it for too long.

I don't want her to be in danger.
She's not an ordinary woman, but
I want her to find the happiness that any woman deserves.
ZA ZA

I told you that you went soft.
Even if you didn't stop me,
I'm not sure I could have killed that kid.
I probably have no right to talk.
I can't be hard with her around.

It's too late for me to want human kindness.
I don't wanna trust people until the day I die
I don't wanna have feelings.
I want to stay ruthless. A cold-blooded killer who can kill women or children like it was nothin'.



We found Ihei and Risuke's bodies.

He got away...

There's one more thing.
What is it?
We have 2 down, meaning there's 6 of us left.
Jintetsu's help would come in real handy.
It looks like he's injured.
There was a lot of blood at the scene. I doubt he could continue walking.

*See translation notes

That's true.
Let everyone know there's gonna be a meeting.

BASH

You shouldn't be moving yet.
Well, I don't have the luxury of lyin' around.
I don't need to hear that from both of you.
I'll pay back my debt to you.

After last night, if you're looking to leave Kasukabe...
.. you also wanna look out for Izou's men.
Only one man saw me.
I wish you luck.
Thanks.

I don't see a single soul.

They read his move...
The exit should be around here somewhere.
I was sure we'd run into men wanting to ask questions...
DASH
Where do you think you're going?
You knew this was going to be a possibility from the start,
right?

What are you gonna do if you go back?
Are you gonna kill your childhood friend, or kill the man you helped last night?
You don't know, do you? As long as you're conflicted, you shouldn't meddle.
You end up doing more harm than good.
Neither of them are just men.
You also don't owe either of them anything.
Are you still going to go back?

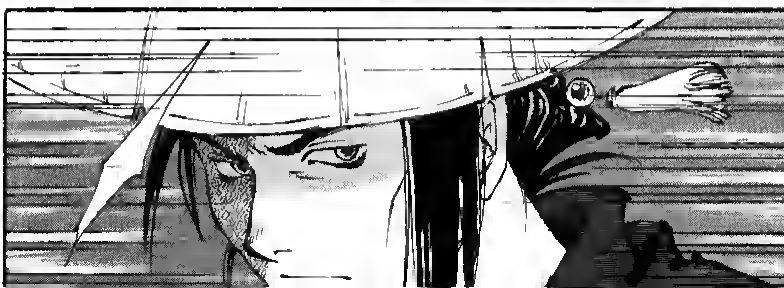
I don't know if I can live through this.
Makoto, you gotta promise to run if need be.
Are you all right?
Don't worry about me.
I'm not leaving you!
You know I can't do that.
That's comforting to know.
When the time comes, I'll save you.
You can't call me a burden right now.
You're the one that's badly injured this time.

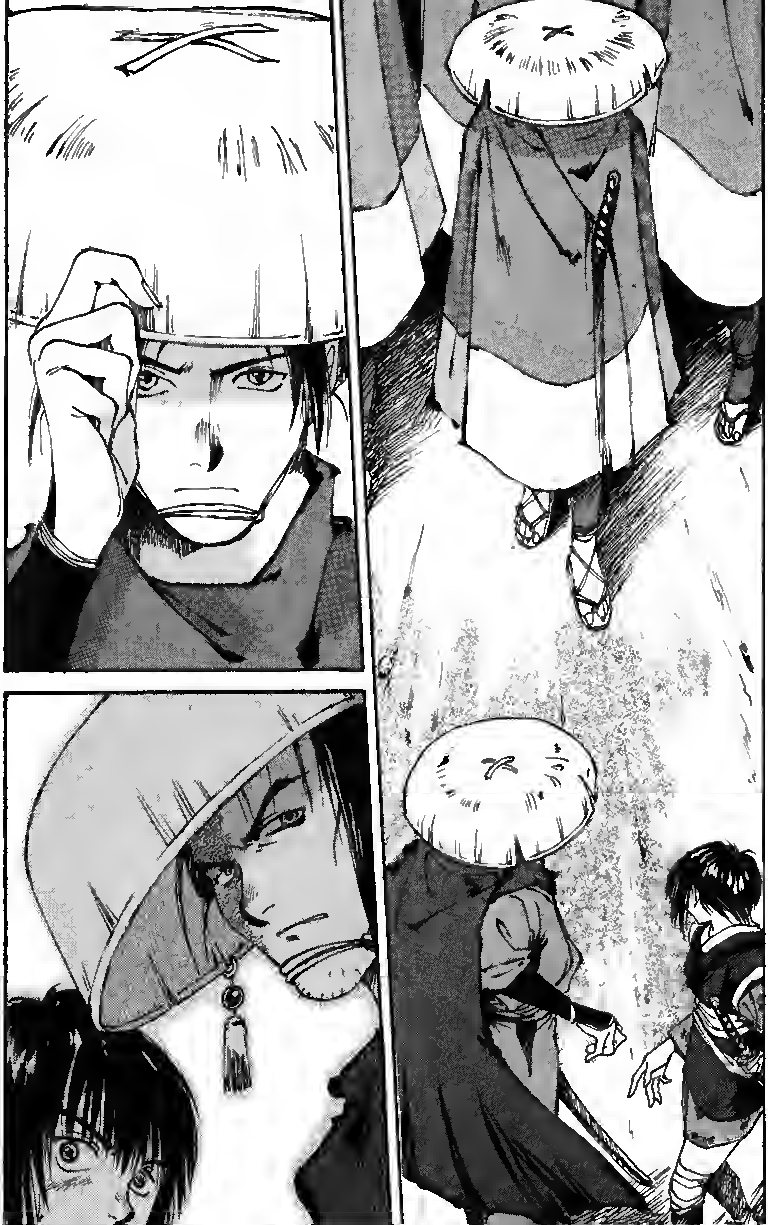
Why do you look so serious?
What?

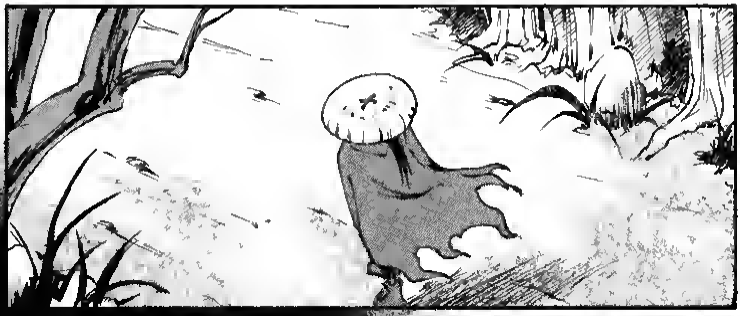
I might be a coward for telling you at a time like this..

I...

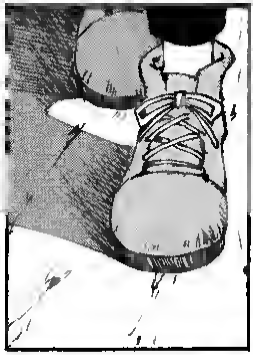
Makoto...
I have something to tell you



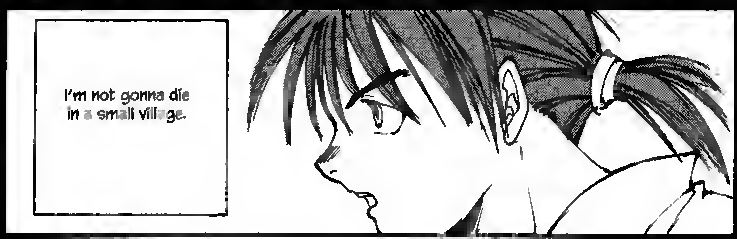




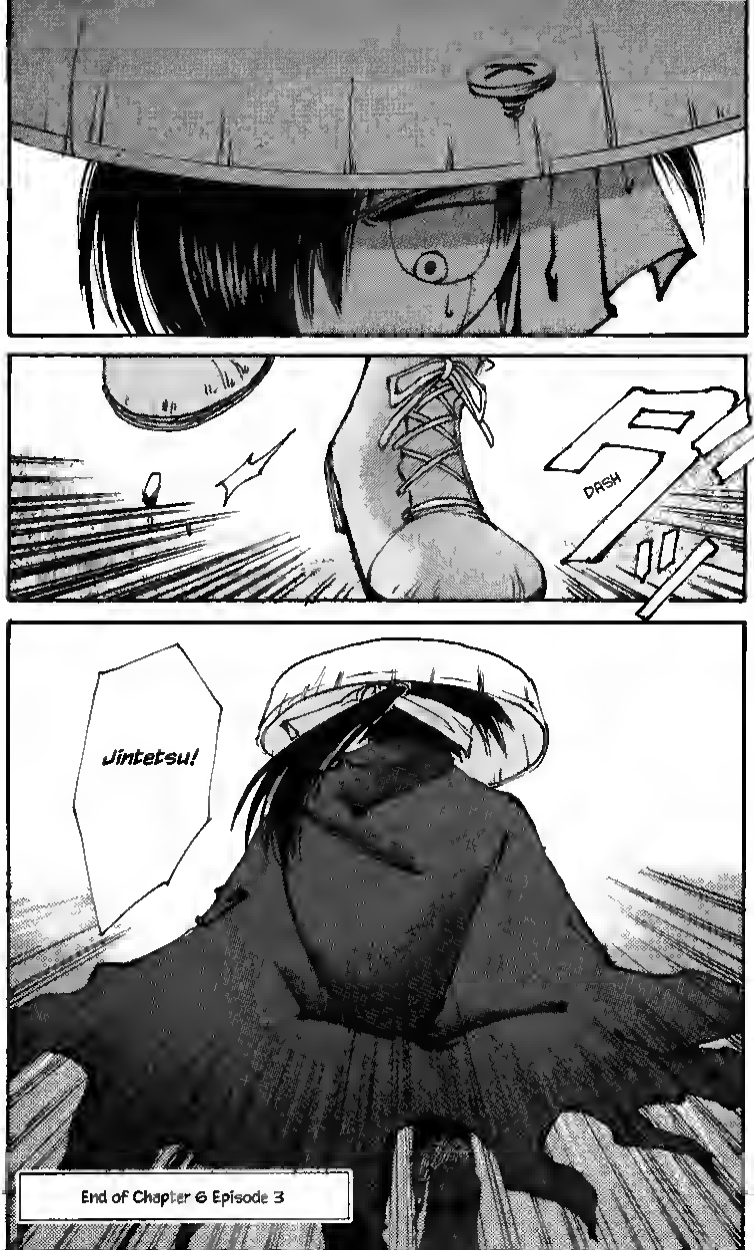
Jintetsu .



When I grow up, I'm gonna leave this town.


I'm not gonna die in a small village.

I don't wanna have feelings.
Looking at ya reminds me of myself when I was younger.


DASH
Jintetsu!
End of Chapter 6 Episode 3

第六幕
COLORS
(二色の独楽)
—第四景—
Chapter 6
Episode 4

People call this type of thing. .
...chasing a ferret.

I hear ferrets don't take the same road twice..
You took care of two of my men last night.
I'm here to pay you back.

Makoto...
You can protect yourself, right?

TOSS

Jintetsu!

Why do you let your feelings get to your head?
You do this every time!
CLANG

I'm injured, so I had to hold back, but looks like that was enough.
You think a twerp like you can lead a family?
Looks like the Izou clan won't last much longer.
You're dead meat now!
SNICKER

KOFF
Father!
THUD

You used the same dirty trick twice...
Father!
I never expected to hear that from you, Renji the Firewalker.
Dirty trick?
You've turned your back on the Tosei code so I don't wanna hear you moan about dirty tricks
We're not samurais, so we don't live by the Bushido.* However, you, as a Toseimin, have a code of conduct.

*See translation notes.

FOAMHIPR
Our lives are on the line. We don't have the room to play fair.
THUD
!

Take this!
KICK
STAB
!

I know what you're trying to say, but....
...I can't have some weakling do me in.

.....
SLAM
Die!

UNGH

You're mine now!
KICK
CLASH
CLANG

FHOOSH
Damn kid!
CLANG

LEAP
Father!
Makoto, stop!
CHAT
!
You!!
GGH!

DRIP DRIP

Father!
Father?
SLIDE
He got in the way...
What the hell...

.....
How pathetic...

Father...
Why...

Why did you...

You were trying to get rid of me.
Father, you're a fool...
I was...
...planning to die with you.
I was never allowed to cry as a kid.
Now I can't cry even when I want to.
GRAB

ZA
DASH

HUFF HUFF
We were too late.
TWITCH

There's something..
KOFF
I have to tell you...
.....
Makoto...
The guy that stole the money with Benzou's help ..
That was me

I'm sorry.
FLOP
KOFF
I was the one...
I couldn't tell you
I don't know why.
..that destroyed your family.
If I had a choice...
...I wish you were the one to kill me.
.....

Jintetsu, I'm sure Makoto..
...went after Ryujiro.
You gotta hurry
DASH

はあ
はあ
PANT PANT
Get over it, kid.
If you don't back off, you're gonna end up dead.
はあ
PANT
はあ
PANT

Go ahead, kill me.
I'll just be sure to take you down with me
ZZR
Kill me, bastard!
CHHT

LEAP
CLANG
SLAMM

CRACK!

Jintetsu...
Let 'im go. He's got nothing to do with your business.
The kid attacked me first, so I was just defending my hide.

I thought you might take Renji's side and show up at some point.
You're a little late.
If that's the case...
... then why don't you join me?
I'm not on anybody's side.
I already refused.
If I return, I'll be the next in line. I need a strong right-hand man.
No.
You won't change your mind?

CTHHT
How about in exchange for this kid's life.
I'm sure you came here to save 'im.
You must be pretty desperate to use that trick.
I don't give a damn about this twerp's life It's up to you.
What do you say?

Think about it. I'm thinking of you too. You don't wanna end your life as a drifter.
Come with me, and you'll have your own men and your own turf.
Everyone wants power and money.
C'mon, Jintebei.
ZA

...you refuse to die in a little village.
Is this what you wanted?
Ryujiro, as a kid, you always used to say that...
That was long time ago.
I also no longer have a home.
If I had a choice, I would have stayed.
That's true.
...that came from living a simple life in a small village.
I wanted ordinary happiness...

I refuse to forget that.
When I do, I'll end up like you.
I'm sure you don't understand now..
...or ever.
What are you talking about?
You take back what was stolen from you.
That's the Tosei code. We're not doing anything different.
True
I'm the one that's acting outside of the code.

If I let this one go, he'll be back to kill me to avenge his father.
Can't do it.
I'll only ask one more time.
Will you let the kid go?
That's true.
It looks like I may have to fight you after all.

BASA

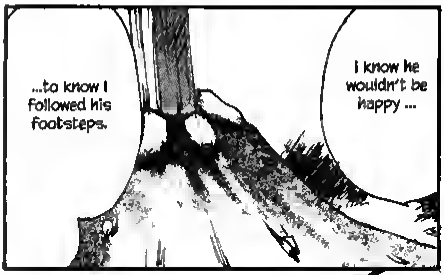
THUD

.....
CAW

What are you gonna do now?
You've helped me a lot.
Thank you.
Father wanted me to go see this Boss that he knew.
I don't plan on it. I'm just like you...a drifter.

...I'm an Akagi.
I know that, but...

Renji wanted you to live as a woman.
The road is no place for a woman.


...to know I followed his footsteps.
I know he wouldn't be happy ...

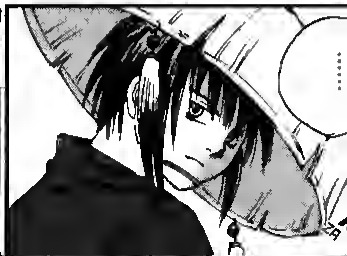
...now that he's dead.
But, I'm no longer a woman...

Next time I see you, you'll still be an enemy of the Akagi family.
Don't forget that.
BASAH
Hey!

...save my life?
Why did you...

.....

...when I was young.
You reminded me of...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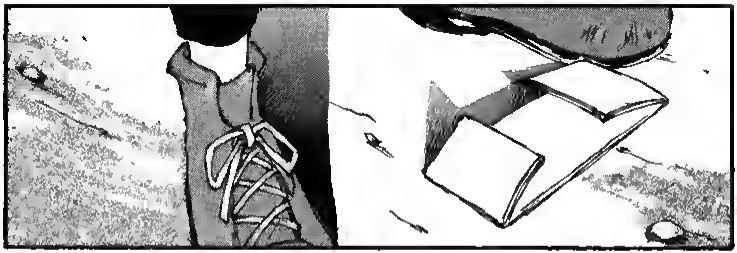
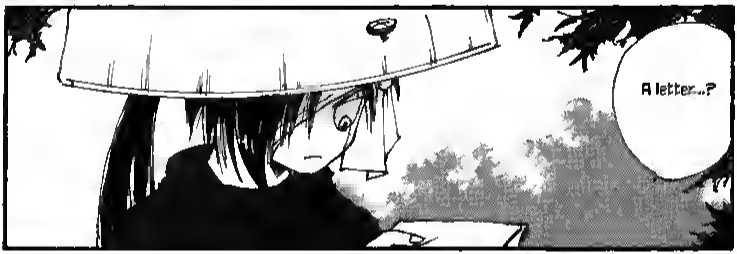



A letter...?

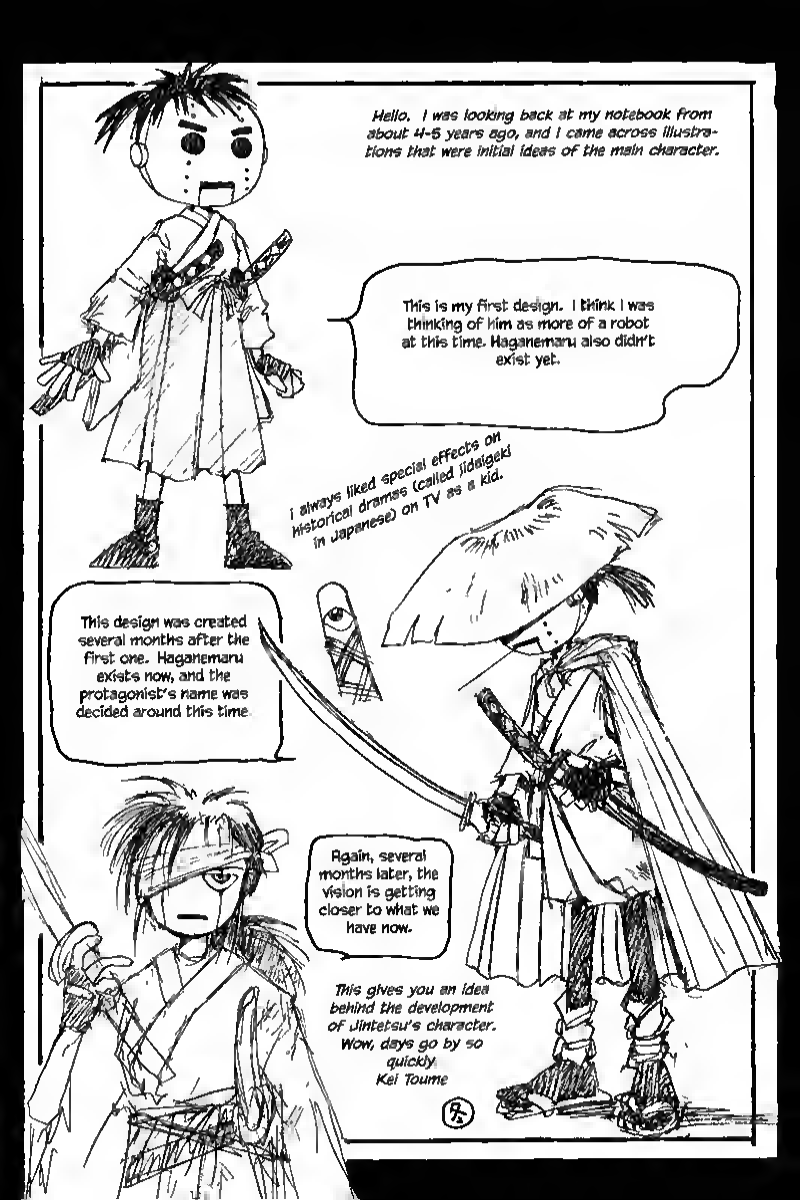
Makoto hasn't read it yet.
If you give it to her now, the misunderstanding will get cleared up.

He wrote about you in there.

I think Renji wrote this for Makoto as a letter of introduction to a boss he knew...

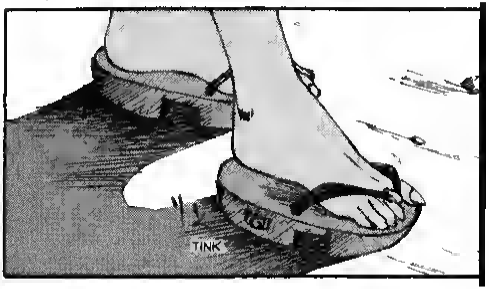
You really are soft, aren't you.
RIPARRRIP
GAAAH!
Let's just go with the flow, eh...
Oh
well..
THE END OF KUROGANE VOL 2

THE BEGINNING OF THE
黒鉄
KUROGANE


Hello. I was looking back at my notebook from about 4-5 years ago, and I came across illustrations that were initial ideas of the main character.
This is my first design. I think I was thinking of him as more of a robot at this time. Haganemaru also didn't exist yet.
I always liked special effects on historical dramas (called jidaigeki in Japanese) on TV as a kid.
This design was created several months after the first one. Haganemaru exists now, and the protagonist's name was decided around this time.
Again, several months later, the vision is getting closer to what we have now.
This gives you an idea behind the development of Jintetsu's character. Wow, days go by so quickly.
Kei Toume

Translation Notes

Japanese is a tricky language for most Westerners, and translation is often more art than science. For your edification and reading pleasure, here are notes on some of the places where we could have gone in a different direction in our translation of the work, or where a Japanese cultural reference is used.



***Geta**, page 18*
Traditional Japanese footwear worn by both genders. It is kind of a hybrid between clogs and flip-flops. They are sandals with a wooden base with fabric straps for the feet. The height of the clog can differ from low to extremely high. The platform/base of the geta can vary in shape, from square toes and heels, to more ovol shapes. Osaya is wearing a geta.

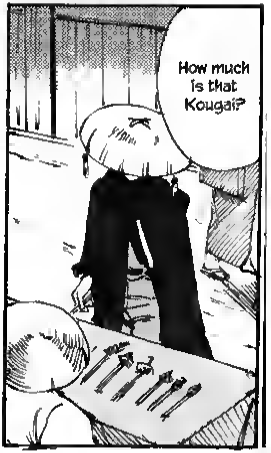
***Sando-Gasa**, page 5*
Sando-Gasa is the wide-brimmed, round hat worn by Jintetsu and other male travelers (including Makato) throughout the book. They are large, woven sedge hats that protect travelers from the elements during their travels. They were wide brimmed to also serve as an umbrella for traveling during inclement weather.

***Kimana and Hairstyle**, page 19*

There are differences in both hairstyle and kimono between women and little girls. During the Edo Period, grown women styled their long hair in elaborate updos. However, a popular haircut for girls was a medium-length bab, warn simply like Osaya. Kimono means clothing in Japanese, and both men and women wear kimonos (although they are styled very differently). Kimana consists of a straight-lined robe with full sleeves that are precisely wropped and secured with a wide sash, called the obi. The modern Japanese kimona that people wear todoy are similar to the styles thot become populor during the Eda period. Traditionolly, there were differences in the kimono depending on the wearer's age, marital stotus, social class, profession, etc. Girls' kimonos were not drastically different from women's kimonos, but there were differences, such os the way the obi wos tied.

***Manju**, poge 48*

Manju is a kind af traditional Japonese steamed cake. The most camman variety is made af a sweetened bean poste (made with azuki beans and sugar) surrounded by a pastry-like exterior mode from flour, rice flour, and buckwheat. Matcha man*jyu* is ane of the most common vorieties, where green tea (*motcho*) is added to the exterior cake. Man*jyu* can also be savory, with meat and vegetable fillings instead of sweetened bean paste. However, they are called *nikuman* (Niku means meat, man is short for mon*ju*) insteod of mon*jyu*.



Kougai/Kanzashi, *page 60*
Kanzashis are various hair ornaments used to decorate traditional Japanese hairstyles. Kurogane is set in the Edo Period, which ranges from 1603 to 1867. The more complex coiffures became popular among women during the Edo Period, and *konzashi* also came into wide use during this time. Kanzashi can be made from materials such as lacquered wood, gold-and-silver-plated material, tortoiseshell and silk. The design can range from simple to extremely complex. Different kanzashis were worn depending on the time of year, class, and profession to name a few.

Waraji, *page 183*
Waraji is a traditional Japonese footwear made of woven straw rope worn by commoners.

Jidaigeki, *page 246*
Jidaigeki is a very popular genre of film, televisian, and theater in Japan. It's both fiction and nonfiction based in the Edo period or earlier. It ranges from serious, historical subject matter to over-the-top comedy. There is a subgenre within the genre called *chambara*, which features a lot of swordplay. The most popular theme is a fairly simple one where the good people are rewarded, evil people are punished, and justice prevails. Most *jidaigeki* take place in the Edo period. Some of the *jidaigeki* films that have found popularity in the United states include *Roshomon*, the Zatoichi series, and *Yojimbo*.

Kuragane Volume 3 will be available in English December 26, 2007. Don't miss it!

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Inside samurai Jintetsu's robot body beats a broken heart. Although he has avenged his father's death, Jintetsu is fated to live life as a lonely drifter—a man with no home, no title, and no peace.

But then he runs into fellow assassin Renji the Firewalker, whose fate seems to be intertwined with his own. Jintetsu and Renji have worked together in the past and share an unspoken bond of understanding and respect—that is, until Ryujiro, Jiotetsu's childhood friend, hires the cyborg samurai to assassinate Renji. Now Jintetsu must choose between his friends—and whichever side he takes, he'll still be in grave danger.

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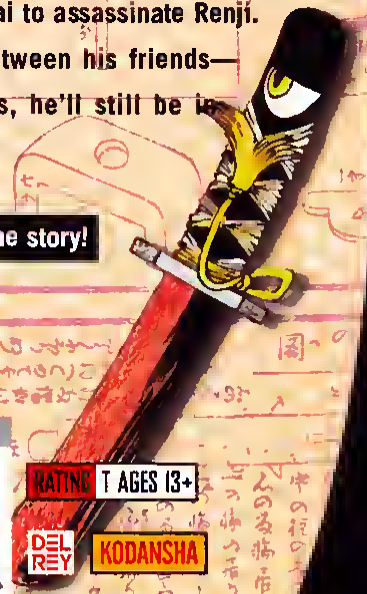

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